

Supplying Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Istanbul with Fresh Produce

In the present paper, we will attempt to figure out how the inhabitants of the Ottoman Empire, both within and outside of government circles, organised the production and distribution of fresh milk, fruit and vegetables for seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Istanbul. As one aspect of this question, we will discuss the localities in and around the capital where these foods were grown and treated prior to consumption. Their transportation and sale also will form a major concern; to put it differently, we will focus on those fruit, vegetables and other edibles whose distribution was commercialised, as opposed to those foodstuffs which were produced by townsmen keeping cows, sheep, gardens and vineyards principally for the consumption of their own families. We will bring together the scanty information available on the manner of operating such commercial farms as we can document. Sultanic gardens as suppliers of fruit, milk or vegetables, both to the Palace and to the urban population at large, provide an additional focus of interest. We also will concern ourselves with the manner in which the workmen who cultivated these gardens, often immigrants, were integrated into the social fabric of Istanbul – or else how they were marginalised, and vegetated on the plots they worked until they finally returned to their villages.

But in addition, we will also focus on the culture of gardens and gardening, for both Ottomans and foreign visitors in the period under discussion were of the opinion that cultivating and enjoying gardens constituted an important aspect of Ottoman social life. Certain gardens were considered famous both by Ottomans and foreigners; *teferrüç* (excursions) to the gardenlands outside of the city were enjoyed both by the well-to-do and by modest artisans, who visited these places in groups to celebrate the reception of new masters into their guilds. Thus Istanbul's gardens formed a site in which social life intersected with economic necessities, and the present paper will show some aspects of this complex process.

Just as other Ottoman towns and cities, *intra muros* Istanbul as well as the adjacent smaller townships of Eyüp, Galata and Üsküdar were surrounded by belts of gardens and vineyards, which also served as sites of *villegiatura* during the summer months. Invariably, these spatial arrangements emerged as soon as a former village grew in size and functional differentiation to

become an urban settlement.¹ In spite of the relative infertility of much of the countryside immediately surrounding the capital, *intra muros* Istanbul possessed land suitable for gardens and vineyards. For the former moats of the Byzantine land walls, and also a number of large disused cisterns and even small harbors which since had been filled in, provided well-watered land rich in humus. In addition, the countryside on the Anatolian shore of the Sea of Marmara, easily accessible by boat, has retained a reputation for its fruit even today, in spite of rampant industrial pollution. Given this geographical setting, the search for commercial links from the 'garden belt' to the consuming centre of Istanbul also includes a concern with maritime traffic, for the latter formed an indispensable precondition for the marketing of produce within the Marmara region in its entirety.

Farming for the market, in Mecklenburg and outside the walls of Istanbul

When it comes to modeling the commercial relationships of fruit and vegetable producers to the consumers of the Ottoman capital, the now almost two hundred-years old scheme devised by the Mecklenburg gentleman farmer Johann Heinrich von Thünen is still very serviceable, all the more as Von Thünen thought in terms of a countryside with only primitive roads and without railroads.² According to this model, we begin by assuming a city situated in a plain of even fertility, where there exist no natural impediments to traffic. In consequence, distance and the transportation costs which result from the need to employ carts, horses, or donkeys, and of course the indispensable workmen, constitute the major determinant of the crops which will be cultivated in any given location. An outermost ring will be devoted to animal grazing, because products such as wool, cheese or salted butter will not easily spoil, and therefore are amenable to transportation over long distances. Moreover, sheep and cows whose meat is intended for human

¹ The fundamental book on Istanbul's food supply is still Robert Mantran, *Istanbul dans la seconde moitié du XVII^e siècle, Essai d'histoire institutionnelle, économique et sociale* (Paris, Istanbul, 1962). For the sources of non-grain foods consumed in late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century Istanbul, see also Suraiya Faroqhi, *Towns and Townsmen of Ottoman Anatolia, Trade, Crafts and Food Production in an Urban Setting* (Cambridge, 1984).

² Johann Heinrich von Thünen, *Der isolierte Staat in Beziehung auf Landwirtschaft und Nationalökonomie*, ed. and commented by Hermann Lehmann and Lutz Werner (Berlin, 1990). Von Thünen himself has suggested six circles, so that after the woodlands (2nd circle) there follow fields where sophisticated crop rotations are practiced, of the kind which had been developed but recently, namely in the course of the eighteenth century. As to the fourth circle, it is devoted to 'improved' meadows, while the following two zones (5th and 6th respectively) are assigned to three-field agriculture and the raising of animals on 'unimproved' pastures. However in the reception of Von Thünen's ideas by later geographers, this model was often simplified as to contain only four circles, as outlined above. For our purposes, this latter version makes more sense, as the lack of water in much of Thrace and Anatolia did not permit the extensive cultivation of water meadows.

consumption can be walked to the slaughterhouses on their own four feet. Closer to the city are the areas which constitute its bread basket; for while grain also does not spoil easily, it is quite heavy in relation to its market price, and thus more expensive to move. Yet closer we will find forests systematically exploited both for firewood and timber; while these latter items also are relatively cheap, their bulkiness makes transportation quite arduous and therefore expensive. However the innermost ring, in immediate proximity to the city, will be devoted to items which before refrigeration, could not be moved over long distances at all; put differently, they may be said to have 'infinite' transportation costs. Such goods will include fresh vegetables, fruit and flowers, but also milk and eggs. As to the territory whose relationship to Istanbul we will be studying, it forms the 'first zone' of Von Thünen's model.

However, while in its original form, the model devised by Von Thünen consisted of concentric rings, the four zones surrounding Istanbul in real life were of highly irregular shape. This was due to a factor of which Von Thünen himself had been perfectly cognizant, namely the availability of waterways, which allowed cultivators and traders to substantially cut down transportation costs. Where water courses are available, the tidy circles of the model will thus show more or less extensive outward 'bulges'. Such 'bulges' accounted for the irregularities in the case of the Istanbul supply region; for the city lies on the Bosphorus, which links the Black Sea to the Sea of Marmara, with the Golden Horn and the Gulf of Izmit as supplementary waterways. Moreover the Golden Horn provided a safe harbour, located right in the centre of the city. As a result, the 'first ring' supplying Istanbul was not only irregular in shape, but also much more extensive than it could have been if there had been no seas. As it was, the 'first ring' extended way beyond the Sea of Marmara and in its southern section, included the coastal region of northwestern Anatolia. As to the northern limits, by the eighteenth century they probably extended to include the villages of the middle Bosphorus.

In terms of transportation costs, it certainly made more sense to bring in fruit or vegetables from the southern shores of the Gulf of Izmit, the well-cultivated hinterland of Bursa, than from inland sites located close to the city's land walls, in eastern Thrace. The vicinity of Üsküdar could be developed into a garden area serving not only this relatively small town itself, but also the great city on the other side of the Bosphorus. In addition, from the eighteenth century onwards, settlements such as Büyükdere, relatively far to the north, also began to deliver garden produce to

urban dwellers, thus becoming part of Istanbul's 'first ring'. In fact, the beginnings of this development had already been visible in the middle of the sixteenth century, when the classical scholar Petrus Gyllius praised the Bosphorus hills covered with gardens and vineyards, where both fruit trees and flowers grew in abundance.³ Thus the area which must be considered as a source for Istanbul's fresh foods 'bulged' dramatically to the north, while in its southern section, it annexed to itself territories which one would otherwise consider the sole hinterland of Bursa.

While Von Thünen's model thus explains the location of vegetable patches and orchards in the immediate vicinity of the city walls, as well as on the far shore of the Sea of Marmara, it has one important limitation: it is of no help wherever autoconsumption is widespread. For in such cases, it is perfectly feasible for a family to work a garden plot in a location too distant from the market to make the project worthwhile for a commercial producer. Apart from the fact that otherwise unemployed family labour can take charge of the transportation of fruits and vegetables, it is also feasible for part of the family to move to the garden during the summer months, and consume part of the produce *in situ*. But on the other hand, the very fact that Von Thünen's model does make sense in terms of the productive activities observed 'on the ground', indicates that at least by the seventeenth century, commercial production dominated the picture, even though the importance of autoconsumption should never be underestimated.

Some essential primary sources

When dealing with the seventeenth century, we can garner a good deal of information from the central Ottoman chancery registers, also known as the 'Registers of Important Affairs' (Mühimme Defterleri). From 1650 onwards, the more specialised 'Complaint Registers' (Şikâyet Defterleri) can supplement the older series. These latter registers contain the official responses to queries from administrative officials 'on the spot', and, particularly in the case of the 'Complaint Registers', to petitions submitted by taxpayers who had not succeeded in resolving their

³ In the 1550s, most of these settlements were still tiny. Even if the only detailed description which we possess for this period was written by a man whose interest was focused on antiquity to the exclusion of almost anything else, Petrus Gyllius' casual remarks concerning the sites he visited still indicate that these were for the most part, not very densely inhabited. Compare the recent translation: Petrus Gyllius, *İstanbul Boğazı*, tr. from the original Latin with notes by Erendiz Özbayoğlu (Istanbul, 2000). For a commentary compare also Semavi Eyice, *Bizans Devrinde Boğaziçi* (Istanbul, 1976), which in spite of its title, really focuses on the Ottoman period.

differences in front of the judges (kadis) of their home districts.⁴ However among the tens of thousands of cases contained in these registers, the number dealing in one way or another with the gardens surrounding Istanbul, and those of the Marmara region in general, is strictly limited; moreover I certainly cannot claim to have found all the relevant entries.⁵

Concerning the eighteenth century, the present author has already studied, in a different context, a number of kadi registers concerning the township of Eyüp, whose territory began immediately beyond the Istanbul city walls.⁶ These registers, compiled by the scribes of the local tribunal and containing both disputed cases and agreements with respect to which the court took on the function of a notary public, provide interesting evidence on market gardening. For the land immediately beyond the Istanbul city walls was not fully urbanized before the 1960s, and in the period under discussion, largely used by gardeners and dairy farmers. Documents copied into the kadi registers deal with the inventories of such farms, compiled when the owners had died and the properties were due to pass on to the legal heirs. Or in some instances, they may deal with the sales of such semi-rural properties, or else with accidents and sudden deaths which had occurred on them. Thus these documents, occasionally and quite unintentionally, provide us with valuable information on how gardenlands close to the capital were exploited. In addition, the recent publication of a sizeable selection of sultanic commands dealing with agriculture and pertaining to the second half of the eighteenth century, has appreciably enlarged our source base.⁷

⁴ For a listing of the surviving registers see the (anonymous) *Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi Rehberi* (Ankara, 1992).

⁵ An exhaustive study, for the present, seems an impossible undertaking. For the typed catalogue available in the archives, which lists brief summaries of all the documents contained in the relevant registers, reaches only to the end of the sixteenth century. For the later years, the researcher has to go through the original documents one by one, and the likelihood of missing something of importance is substantial. An exhaustive search at present is only possible for those registers which have been published in their entirety, often with very good indexes. As a sampling, compare İsmet Binark *et alii* (eds.) *3 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri 973/1565*, 2 vols. (Ankara, 1993); *idem*, *5 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri (973/1565-66)*, 2 vols (Ankara, 1994); *idem*, *6 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri 972/1564-65*, 3 vols. (Ankara, 1995).
⁶ Suraiya Faroqhi, "Migration into Eighteenth-Century 'Greater Istanbul' as Reflected in the Kadi Registers of Eyüp", *Turcica*, 30 (1998): 163-183.

⁷ Compare Ahmet Kal'a *et alii* (eds.) *İstanbul Külliyyatı I, İstanbul Ahkâm Defterleri..Tarım Tarihi.* (Istanbul, 1997--).
Once again, we are concerned with official responses to the complaints of tax-paying subjects. But the registers newly instituted in the mid-eighteenth century, differently from their predecessors, were divided up according to the provinces from which the complaints in question had originated. For this particular purpose, Istanbul and the surrounding districts of Eyüp, Üsküdar and Galata were treated as if they constituted a province (*vilayet*) of their own. In addition, by the second half of the eighteenth century, the number of recorded complaints had increased exponentially. This intensification of administrative activity seems to indicate a newly-found will on the part of the Ottoman central administration to make decisions affecting the lives of its tax-paying subjects, at least in the Empire's central provinces, where the rise of local 'power magnates' could be prevented to some extent.

Even more importantly for the purposes of the present study, we also possess narrative sources which reflect the arrangements by which the Ottoman capital was supplied with fruit and vegetables. Among these texts, the most important is doubtless the account by the seventeenth-century traveller Evliya Çelebi, who has devoted a full volume to the city of his birth.⁸

Fortunately for our purposes, the author does not limit his description to the city proper, but also includes the public resorts and picnic grounds (*mesire*), which constituted an important site of Ottoman urban social life during the summer months. Evliya was also interested in the seaside villas whose possession, in the eighteenth century, was to become a significant marker of high social status. Since such villas generally possessed gardens, and the *mesires*, of which the author was especially fond, also were often located in the middle of gardenlands, Evliya's descriptions give us a fair idea of the more famous gardens existing in and around mid-seventeenth-century Istanbul. Unfortunately for the economic historian, the famous traveller's point of view was that of the *flâneur* and not that of the gentleman farmer...

Into this Ottoman context, I plan to introduce the observations and calculations of Domenico Sestini (around 1750-1832), an Italian visitor who, albeit a classical scholar by profession, did possess a particular interest in gardening with a view toward the market.⁹ Sestini visited Istanbul and parts of Anatolia before 1785, and has, among other relevant material, written a short text

⁸ *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnâmesi, Topkapı Sarayı Bağdat 304 Yazmasının Transkripsyonu-Dizini*, vol. 1, ed. by Orhan Şaik Gökyay (Istanbul, 1996). On the manner in which the author used his sources when writing this particular volume of his grand travelogue, compare Meşküre Eren, *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnâmesi Birinci Cildinin Kaynakları Üzerinde bir Araştırma* (Istanbul, 1960). While Evliya was a narrator first and foremost and historical/topographical accuracy was not his primary concern, his account makes it possible to form a general notion of seventeenth-century Ottoman urban life, which can then be verified with the aid of official documents. Evliya Çelebi was born in 1611 as the son of the chief goldsmith to the Ottoman Palace; on his mother's side, he was related to Melek Ahmed Paşa, who ultimately became Grand Vizier. Evliya had religious-legal training but avoided the public offices for which his education and family connections qualified him, preferring the life of a professional traveller and travel author. His great work consists of ten volumes, of which the first encompasses only Istanbul, and the tenth, Cairo and Egypt. Evliya must have died shortly after 1683, probably in Cairo. A good many studies on his work have been undertaken in recent years; for an introduction, compare Evliya Çelebi, *The Intimate Life of an Ottoman Statesman, Melek Ahmed Pasha (1588-1662) as Portrayed in Evliya Çelebi's Book of Travels*, tr. and annotated by Robert Dankoff and Rhoads Murphey (Albany, 1991).

⁹ After having served an Italian prince as a librarian, from 1770 onwards Domenico Sestini began a series of travels to the Middle East, covering Asia Minor, Mesopotamia and the Balkans, a lengthy stay in Istanbul forming part and parcel of the project. Sestini was a travel writer by profession, publishing extensively on epigraphy and numismatics, but also on economic geography. After his return to Europe, Sestini visited the Germanies and Hungary on various scholarly assignments. He was appointed a professor at the university of Pisa and ended his long life in his native city of Florence; compare the relevant entry in the *Enciclopedia Italiana*, 1949 edition, by Giovanni Pugliese Carratelli (Rome, 1950).

concerning the cultivation and possible profits of a vineyard in the vicinity of Istanbul.¹⁰ In a later section of his little book, he lists the vegetables and flowers being cultivated on the shores of the Bosphorus. Sestini is very much interested in classifying the plants which he has encountered in the vicinity of Istanbul according to the Linnean system; as he has also included the Turkish names current at that time, his work can be read as a glossary of plant names. But for our purposes, his work is mainly interesting because of the light it sheds on the fruit and vegetable consumption of the Istanbulus, especially, but by no means exclusively, the better-off among them.

Unfortunately for us however, Sestini is none too specific about the sources of his information, nor does he tell us explicitly to which gardens he had obtained access.¹¹ Occasionally, he refers to the properties of certain foreign ambassadors, which are of course not really indicative concerning the gardening practices of Ottoman gentlemen. However Sestini does at times tell us if a plant was only or largely favoured by foreigners, or had recently been introduced by them; so at least he himself was aware of the different gardening cultures existing side by side on the shores of the Bosphorus.¹²

Supplementing bread

It would of course be very helpful if we could estimate the quantities of beans, squashes and melons which reached the Istanbul markets in any one year, but at this stage of our research, this is not (as yet?) possible. Even concerning the figure basic for our needs, namely the size of the

¹⁰ Domenico Sestini, *Opuscoli del Signor Abate Domenico Sestini* (Florence, 1785), This volume contains the following treatises: "Descrizione del Litorale del Canale di Costantinopoli e della Coltura delle Vigne lungo le Coste del medesimo," "Della Coltura di varie cose Geoponiche lungo le Coste medesime," "Idea dei Giardini turco-Bisantini, e Coltura dei vari Fiori che si fa nei medesimi," and "Della Caccia Turca, con una Descrizione degli Animali, e degli Ucelli, che si osservano annualmente lungo il Canale di Costantinopoli," this last piece is not relevant for our purposes. As my knowledge of Italian is limited, I also have consulted a German translation: Domenico Sestini, *Beschreibung des Kanals von Konstantinopel, des dasigen Wein-, Acker- und Garten-Baues und der Jagd der Türken*, tr. by C. J. Jagemann, *Neue Sammlung von Reisebeschreibungen*, Part 8 (Hamburg, 1786).

¹¹ We may assume that some of the information came from the hired workmen employed in gardens and vineyards; for Sestini is at pains to tell us that those coming from the western Balkans spoke a 'corrupt' version of Italian: Sestini, *Opuscoli*: 30.

¹² See Sestini, *Beschreibung*, pp. 55-56 for the observation that sweet peas had recently been introduced by the 'Franks'. On the other hand, Sestini was much impressed by the clever way in which the locals transformed ordinary chickpeas (*nohud*) into the tasty snack known as *leblebi*. Specialists in this craft possessed their own shops already in the time of Evliya Çelebi, and it was widely believed that *leblebi* was beneficial to soldiers suffering from dysentery. Compare *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi, 1. Kitap*, ed. by Orhan Şaik Gökyay: 263

capital's population as a whole, we have to satisfy ourselves with more or less educated guesses. After all, the famous counts of Ottoman taxpayers, which constitute our basic source of demographic information at least where the sixteenth century is concerned, were not prepared for Istanbul, or else have not survived.¹³ European travellers have sometimes included population estimates in their descriptions, but these figures for the most part are probably not based on any solid evidence. Moreover the frequent plague epidemics which afflicted the city well into the early nineteenth century must have made for serious population losses, more or less rapidly balanced by natural increase and immigration.¹⁴ Yet if we take the impressive size of the built-up area into consideration, even with due allowance for scarcely inhabited lands within the city walls, it seems reasonable to assume that the city contained several hundreds of thousands of inhabitants.¹⁵

While grain certainly formed the 'staff of life' in Ottoman Istanbul as elsewhere, the consumption of vegetables and fruit was of significance as well. Even peasants and soldiers, whose frugality was so greatly admired by the sixteenth-century Habsburg ambassador Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq, used to consume vegetables and garlic along with their bread.¹⁶ From the diary of a not-too-badly-off Istanbul dervish, which covers the closing years of the seventeenth century, we learn that fresh fruit belonged to the joys of life: people sent baskets of these delicacies to their friends, and even at a time of plague and personal bereavement, the author of this diary did not neglect to mention that he had placed fruit received as gifts in a place where they would not spoil.¹⁷ Praising the foods, and especially the fruit available in this or that place, formed part of the encomia of towns popular among Ottoman *literati*. This custom indicates that fruit, and to a lesser degree vegetables, were regarded as a sign of urban prestige, comparable to, albeit on a

¹³ In addition, once tax farming became the dominant mode of tax collection, that is, after the late sixteenth century, taxpayers were not counted in the provinces either.

¹⁴ Daniel Panzac, *La peste dans l'Empire Ottoman 1700-1850* (Louvain, 1985), *passim*.

¹⁵ Compare the article 'Istanbul' in the *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., by Halil Inalcik. This author assumes that in line with what is known about Istanbul in the first half of the twentieth century, 300,000-400,000 constitutes a reasonable estimate for the Ottoman period.

¹⁶ Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq, *The Turkish Letters of Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq, Imperial Ambassador at Constantinople 1554 - 1562*, tr. by Edward Seymour Forster (Oxford, 1968). For the Latin original, with a translation into Dutch, see Augerius Gislenius Busbequius, *Legationis Turcicae epistolae quatuor*, ed. by Zweder von Martels (Hilversum, 1994); this edition has been used when preparing the present study. Compare Busbequius, *Legationis Turcicae*: 258-259 for a janissary observed by the author while eating a salad consisting of beets, onions, garlic, squash and cucumber, seasoned with vinegar and salt.

more modest level, famous public buildings. However we cannot necessarily determine to what extent ordinary men and women, if they did not possess gardens of their own, had access to these delicacies.¹⁸

An approximation is however possible, at least for the late eighteenth century: for Domenico Sestini has done the modern historian the signal favour of noting the prices of many different vegetables by *okka*, thereby providing us with a rough indicator as to which of them were common foods, and which were delicacies only the better-off could afford.¹⁹

Table 1. Prices of vegetables per *okka* (1.28 kg) according to Domenico Sestini

Price in <i>para</i>	Vegetable
1	<i>beyaz lahana</i> (<i>başı ? lahana</i>), <i>kara lahana</i> (green and red cabbage), <i>soğan</i> (green onions), <i>beyaz salata</i> (endives)
2	<i>fasulya</i> (Fagioli turchi, beans, Phaseolus coccineus), <i>beyaz</i> and <i>siyah sarmısak</i> (garlic)
2-3	<i>ispanak</i> (spinach)
3	<i>Arnavud biberi</i> (or simply <i>biber</i>) preserved in vinegar (Spanish pepper)
3-4	<i>karnıbahar</i> (cauliflower)
4	<i>kavun</i> (melons, Cucumis melo) ²⁰

¹⁷ Cemal Kafadar, "Self and Others: the Diary of a Dervish in Seventeenth-century Istanbul and First-person Narratives in Ottoman Literature," *Studia Islamica*, LXIX, (1989): 121-150 and the present author's *Kultur und Alltag im Osmanischen Reich* (Munich, 1995): 218-219.

¹⁸ Sestini, *Beschreibung*: 96 gives a succinct description of the layout of a typical Ottoman garden, which consisted of square beds filled with different plants separated by pathways covered with gravel, so that the earth itself remained all but invisible. Owners with the requisite means adorned their gardens with fountains and kiosks. See moreover p. 106ff. for a listing of plants popular in Istanbul gardens, but also of those grown in flower pots and exhibited, for instance, at the entrance of shops. Sestini also provides information concerning those plants which were often available commercially.

¹⁹ On Ottoman prices and wages, compare Şevket Pamuk, *İstanbul ve diğer Kentlerde 500 Yıllık Fiyatlar ve Ücretler 1469-1998* (Ankara, 2000).

²⁰ In Evliya's time, the melon sellers were famous for their cry: 'three *okkas* for one *akçe*.' Compare *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi, 1. Kitap*, ed. by Orhan Şaik Gökyay: 264. Apparently the juice of the watermelon, and that of other fruits as well, was occasionally fermented to produce a kind of wine: *ibidem*: 313.

Table 2. Prices of fruit per *okka* according to Domenico Sestini

Price in <i>para</i>	Fruit
2	mulberries, <i>kızılcık</i> (cornel cherries), pine nuts
2-3	figs, <i>kızıl kiraz</i> (red cherries), plums
2-8	grapes, according to quality and season
3	hazelnuts, unpeeled
3-4	<i>limon ayvası</i> (sour quince), <i>muşmula</i>
4	<i>çağla badem</i> (green almonds)
4-5	peaches, pears, apples
5	<i>huzenab</i> (<i>Rhamnus zizyphus</i> , It. <i>guigiolo</i> , jujube)
5-7	apricots
6	hazelnuts, peeled

Due to the varying level of water content in these different vegetables, the price is however not the only indicator of 'good value for money': as any novice cook soon finds out, spinach will shrink much more than beans. On the other hand, given the fact that the quantities of garlic which can be added to any food are limited, garlic was the cheapest addition to bread, as it probably had been in Busbecq's time already. The real surprise is the commonness and cheapness of endives, which have no real place in present-day Turkish cuisine. Given the modest price, they should have been readily accessible to the low-budget consumer of eighteenth-century Istanbul. Otherwise, we may assume that the poor confined themselves to beans, cabbage and an occasional dish of spinach, seasoned with garlic and Spanish pepper.²¹

²¹ Sestini, *Beschreibung*: 54-71. It would however be a mistake to assume that the number of vegetables accessible to the consumer of moderate means was as limited as Table 1 might lead us to think. For Sestini describes quite a few vegetables as being frequently cultivated, but does not mention their prices. While these items could not be included in Table 1, they may well have been cheap enough for frequent consumption.

Vegetables in this particular category include celery (*kereviz*) and leeks (*pirasa*), the latter especially popular among Armenians, but also the various varieties of squash (*kabak*). The present-day dish of *kabak dolması* (squash stuffed with rice and meat) was also noted by Sestini. But while today it is normal to use small *zucchini*s for this purpose, in the eighteenth century, it was customary to cut up long squashes (*uzun kabak*, *kol kabak*) 'as if they were sausages' as Sestini put it. Thus it is probable that *zucchini*s only became popular in the nineteenth or twentieth century. *Bal kabağı* or sweet squash, today used primarily as a desert, in the late eighteenth century was popular among the janissaries, who cooked these vegetables to form a thick soup. Sestini also remarked on the frequent consumption of

Fruit consumption also presents some interesting characteristics: first of all, the cheapest fruit were so inexpensive that only cabbage, green onions and endives were cheaper. Thus fresh fruit were not a luxury, but readily accessible. Sestini comments on their, in his opinion, 'immoderate' consumption by the inhabitants of Istanbul, a habit which, in line with the medical theories of his day, he considered detrimental to health. In this context, it is worth noting Sestini's remark that mulberry trees on the Bosphorus were cultivated not for their use in silk-worm raising, but rather for their fruit. To the economic historian of the present day, this observation does not pose any problems where the environs of Istanbul are concerned, as this was never a silk-raising region. But should this remark be taken to imply that the numerous mulberry trees which can be encountered in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Bursa inheritance inventories are not *prima facie* evidence for silk-growing?²²

In terms of the fruit consumption habits of the Istanbulus, it is of interest to compare the observations made by Evliya Çelebi in the mid-seventeenth century with those recorded by the Italian traveller over a hundred and thirty years later. Evliya waxes enthusiastic over the numerous different varieties of peaches available in the Ottoman capital, and notes that a garden especially famed for its fine peaches recently had become the property of the sultan.²³ He also notes that in the garden of Kara Mustafa Paşa, pears of the Malatya and Göksu types were being cultivated. This means that the owner had imported seedlings all the way from eastern and

patlıcan (aubergines), which were baked in the ashes or in the oven as they are today, but also eaten raw; the latter preparation is somewhat difficult to imagine for a modern consumer. Red beets as well as other beet varieties also were cultivated 'everywhere'.

As to melons, which were classed as vegetables and not as fruit, they were consumed in large quantities, 'without regard for quality', as Sestini thought. Thus cheap varieties must have been on the market. In addition, there were numerous herbs available, some wild and some cultivated, which presumably were not only sold and purchased, but also gathered in woods and meadows.

Among the luxury vegetables, it is perhaps of interest that the artichoke (*enginar*), which the modern Turkish consumer knows as a product of the Bursa region, in Sestini's time was cultivated on the shores of the Bosphorus as well, partly as a secondary crop in vineyards. A few vegetables had recently been introduced by the 'Franks', presumably through the mediation of the gardens which several ambassadors maintained in Büyükdere. In the long run, one of the most significant imports was to be the potato, which at the time of Sestini's visit, was still a speciality of the French. But this vegetable had already acquired a Turkish name (*yer elması*, today used rather for the Jerusalem artichoke), so probably it was being noticed by Istanbulus as well. In addition there were the '*frenk maydanos*' and a variety of beet known as *körümb*. Another American import was only to be 'naturalized' in later periods, namely the *pommes d'amour* (*Solanum lycopersicum*), at that time called '*frenk patlıcanı*' in Turkish, the ancestor of the now ubiquitous tomato.

²² For a discussion of Bursa's mulberries in the seventeenth century, compare Haim Gerber, *Economy and Society in an Ottoman City: Bursa, 1600-1700* (Jerusalem, 1988).

²³ Evliya Çelebi *Seyahatnamesi*, 1. Kitap, ed. by Orhan Şaik Gökyay: 264.

southern Anatolia. Evliya also praises the size and juiciness of the local apricots and pomegranades. By contrast, Sestini feels that the cultivation of these same apricots and pomegranades has been rather neglected, so that now the fruit is of poor quality. But he is full of praise for the pears, and also enumerates a variety of different cherries. By contrast in Evliya's time, the cherry orchards, while they did exist in the vicinity of Sarıyer, were not apparently cultivated with a view toward obtaining a variety of different types.²⁴

Grapes: a very special type of fruit

That Sestini paid special attention to grape-growing no doubt had something to do with the fact that he came from a country in which wine was considered a daily necessity. However it is often forgotten that while olive growing on the Aegean coast of Anatolia did suffer an eclipse during the early Ottoman centuries, this was far from being true in the case of grapes.²⁵ Thus Sestini's special emphasis on vines and vineyards reflects not merely the author's preferences, but those of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Istanbul as well. This impression is confirmed by Evliya Çelebi's account; as a glance at the index of his work will indicate, the entry for grapes (*üzüm*) is much longer than that of most other fruits. Thus when discussing the port town of Kasımpaşa, adjacent to Galata and site of the sultan's arsenal, the Ottoman traveller tells us that the gardens of this settlement had a reputation for their fine fruit, including a type of grapes named after 'Cem Şah' and another called 'Syrian'.²⁶ As to the vineyards of Üsküdar, on the other side of the Bosphorus, they produced table grapes which Evliya calls 'Hora'. But the inhabitants of this town also made a spiced grape juice which, being unfermented, was permitted to Muslims.²⁷

In addition grape juice was indispensable for sweetening the numerous puddings which were prepared by special craftsmen for sale, and of course also by domestic cooks. Evliya Çelebi thus

²⁴Sestini, *Beobachtungen*: 77 notes that Engür (Ankara) pears were occasionally cultivated on the shores of the Bosphorus. But in part they were being brought to Istanbul from Ankara, since the local supply did not meet the demand. This indicates that for wealthy families, it was perfectly possible to consume 'luxury fruit' grown at a distance of over 400 km from the capital, and brought to the city over bad roads. For the cherry orchards, compare *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi, 1. Kitap*, ed. by Orhan Şaik Gökyay: 195-196.

²⁵ Although Busbecq, writing in the mid-sixteenth century, was aware of this fact and illustrated it by a picturesque anecdote, he did not apparently convince some of his readers: Busbequius, *Legationis Turcicae*: 304-305.

²⁶ *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi, 1. Kitap*, ed. by Orhan Şaik Gökyay: 180. The Cem Şah he refers to is probably the younger son of Mehmed the Conqueror, who failed in his attempt to seize the Ottoman throne.

reports that all the makers of sweetmeats had to defer to the owners of the 'grape mills', who were wealthy merchants with partners in far away places such as Izmir and Nazilli. However the very existence of these interregional links may indicate that at least part of the fruit milled in Istanbul were not fresh grapes at all, but raisins from Aegean Anatolia.²⁸ Apparently the preparation of raisins was not a major concern among the owners of vineyards on the Bosphorus; already in the sixteenth century, it had been customary to bring in this popular sweetener from the Izmir region, where the summers are hotter and grapes contain more sugar.²⁹

Muslim owners of vineyards, who in the second half of the eighteenth century, were especially numerous along the Anatolian seashore of the Bosphorus, generally specialised in table grapes. Growers and/or sellers had found ways of preserving the fruit in vats, so that particularly the highly prized *çavuş üzümü* was available the year round.³⁰ Some of the Muslim growers also sold their crops to Greek, Armenian and Jewish tavern owners, who produced most of the wine made in Istanbul – apparently the non-commercial manufacture of wine, for the private consumption of vineyard proprietors, was not very common.

Sestini also provides some interesting information concerning the special taxation of vineyards owned by non-Muslims. The *corbacı*, that is the Christian headmen of the villages whose inhabitants grew grapes, had to get special permissions to bring in the harvest from the sultanic chief gardener (*bostancıbaşı*), who was responsible for the entire Bosphorus district. This permission was granted upon payment of a fee, from which Muslims, needing no special permits, were exempt. Only after this permission was in the hands of the *corbacı*, did he announce that the harvest could begin. Normally the grapes were picked in late September, but irregularities were common, as those villages located close to the capital city normally received their permits rather earlier than those situated some distance away. Sestini was himself accustomed to grape harvests being decided upon by a group of local dignitaries, whose decisions were binding for an entire village; but in Italy or France, the decision to harvest depended on the opinion of these experts concerning the ripeness or otherwise of the grapes. The author was thus somewhat surprised by

²⁷ *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi, 1. Kitap*, ed. by Orhan Şaik Gökyay: 205. The term 'Hora' may be a derivation of the Greek word for 'village'; one feels reminded of the '*yerli üzüm*' and '*topico*' mentioned by Sestini, *Opuscoli*: 46-49, for these Turkish and Greek names both denote 'local' grapes.

²⁸ *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi, 1. Kitap*, ed. by Orhan Şaik Gökyay: 251.

²⁹ Faroqhi, *Towns and Townsmen*:

the fact that the *bostancıbaşı*'s permits were issued according to purely administrative criteria.³¹ Presumably the servitors of the chief gardener fanned out of the capital in order to hand out the requisite documents, and may even have stayed in the grape-growing villages in order to ensure the payment of taxes which fell due at harvest time. Such a practice would explain why the vineyard owners of the more remote villages were kept waiting.

Sultanic gardens for profit and pleasure

As in the second half of the eighteenth century, the Bosphorus had become a favourite setting for the lives of well-to-do Istanbulites during the warm season, we can assume that many of the gardens Sestini saw were intended for pleasure, and not primarily for autoconsumption or profit.³² However the two categories often cannot be neatly separated: for the sultanic gardens which covered considerable stretches of land, probably served as *jardins d'agrément* at least potentially, namely whenever the ruler decided to visit them, but in addition had practical importance. For while presumably some of the produce was consumed by the denizens of the Palace, we sometimes encounter the sultan's gardens as an institution selling surpluses on the market. Thus a text from the year 992/1584 tells us that janissaries should not engage in trade – a command which it proved impossible to enforce. However even in this rescript an exception was made for the produce of the Has Bahçe, the sultanic garden close to the Sarayburnu, which the janissaries were permitted to market.³³

Evlıya Çelebi also reports the existence of a dairy farm named after Sultan Selim I (r. 1512-1520) which the author must have believed, whether rightly or wrongly is hard to tell, to have had some connection with the early sixteenth-century warrior sultan. The cows all bore individual names and supposedly gave 40-50 *vakiyye* of milk apiece.³⁴ Visitors, presumably those with the right recommendations, were cordially welcomed. But the traveller warned that due to the dangerous dogs employed in guarding the cows, it was recommended to announce the visit well in

³⁰ Sestini, *Opuscoli*: 46, note 11. On the technique of preservation, which involved the use of mustard seed, compare Busbequius, *Legationis Turcicae*: 94-95.

³¹ Sestini, *Opuscoli*: 49.

³² Tülay Artan, "Architecture as a Theatre of Life: Profile of the Eighteenth-Century Bosphorus", unpublished PhD dissertation, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge MA, 1988.

³³ Mühimme Defteri (from now: MD) 55, pp. 86-87, Nos. 151-152.

³⁴ *Vakiyye* is a variant spelling of *okka*, corresponding to 1.28 kg.

advance.³⁵ Whether the milk (and probably yoghurt) produced also arrived at the Istanbul market unfortunately remains unknown.

In addition, Evliya Çelebi has provided us with the most detailed listing of the palace gardens known to date, his account is all the more valuable as the author had been educated in the Topkapı Sarayı and thus should have been thoroughly familiar with the institution and its far-flung possessions.³⁶ These gardens, many of which also contained the sultans' stables, and furthermore, special meadows in order to provide fresh fodder for the horses, were considered works of architecture. In quite a few instances, Evliya claimed that a given garden had been established by Süleyman the Magnificent, while the famous architect Sinan supposedly had been responsible for their construction. But seventeenth-century sultans also continued to order the institution of new gardens: thus Osman II, despite the briefness of his reign, was responsible for Dolmabahçe on the Bosphorus.³⁷ In Kağıdhane, later to become the 'sweet waters of Europe', Sultan Murad IV had had a garden laid out which the Istanbulis named after his Iranian courtier Mîrgune, who had been its first owner. Even Mehmed IV, still quite young at the time of Evliya's writing, already was credited with the garden of Çamlıca, near Üsküdar, which in the nineteenth century was to be converted into a well-known public park.

All these gardens had been assigned 'gardeners' (*bağban*), in most cases a few hundred each, but due to the privileged position of the Has Bahçe, there were several thousand men on record who served in the sultanic garden close to the Sarayburnu. However these were generally soldiers and not gardeners proper, and their chief the *bostancıbaşı*, a high-level dignitary, also was responsible for matters as alien to gardening as the executions taking place within the Palace proper.

Moreover the vagueness of the terminology and the briefness of the descriptions often make it difficult to determine which pieces of sultanic land were actual gardens and which were used for other purposes, for instance, as hunting preserves. Thus Evliya Çelebi informs us that next to the Çamlıca garden, there existed the *mesire* of Küçük Çamlıca which was reserved for the sultan's hunt.³⁸ This problem of properly identifying the gardens in the narrower sense of the term also is reflected in a remark by Sestini, who claimed that the gardens of the sultans contained more

³⁵ *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi, 1. Kitap*, ed. by Orhan Şaik Gökyay: 208.

³⁶ *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi, 1. Kitap*, ed. by Orhan Şaik Gökyay: 205-206.

³⁷ Only in the mid-nineteenth century was this site built upon, and the still existing Dolmabahçe Palace constructed.

³⁸ *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi, 1. Kitap*, ed. by Orhan Şaik Gökyay: 204

'thistles than narcissus or tulips'; presumably the author had seen a place which contained unimproved grazing land or else formed part of the sultan's hunting grounds.³⁹

In praise of flowers

While of course the role of gardens in supplying the food needs of the Istanbul population constitutes the main reason for our studying them, it would be a serious omission to disregard flowers altogether. Unfortunately, not much information survives concerning the earliest stages of the commercial cultivation of flowering plants.⁴⁰ The earliest Ottoman records dealing with flowers concern the late sixteenth-century sultanic palace, which was supplied with bulbs from the Mediterranean coastlands through deliveries in lieu of taxes and not through the market. It is only with respect to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that some information becomes available concerning market-oriented flower cultivation.⁴¹

However Evliya Çelebi does mention the 'Boşnak Dede rose' as a Kasımpaşa speciality, so that it is possible that this particular flower was being cultivated for sale even in the middle of the seventeenth century.⁴² But the very scantiness of such references in Evliya's account may be taken to indicate that market-oriented flower cultivation on a grander scale was perhaps a later development. Moreover, Evliya Çelebi still viewed the flower sellers together with the sellers of fruit, and his brief description highlighted the latter and neglected the former.⁴³ Yet he did mention flower sellers active near the Yeni Cami, in Eminönü (Taht-e'lkal'e), but also near the mosque of Mehmed the Conqueror, the Aya Sofya and, last but not least, in the area of Aksaray. Sestini saw flower sellers active 'in many corners of the city and on public markets'.⁴⁴ But in addition, in the late eighteenth century a regular flower market was held every Monday in the middle of Istanbul's 'business district', behind the famed Egyptian spice bazaar (Mısır Çarşısı).

³⁹ Sestini, *Beschreibung*: 96.

⁴⁰ However we do have some knowledge of a single mid-eighteenth-century garden of this type, due to an inventory discovered and published by Ahmet Hezarfen, "18. Yüzyılda Eyüp'te Lale Yetiştirenler," *Tarih ve Toplum*, 137 (May 1995): 300-302. This document lists plants individually, some of them have been assigned rather considerable monetary values. Presumably these plants were being raised for sale to well-to-do customers.

⁴¹ For one of the very few studies of Ottoman flower culture, see Ariel Salzmänn, "The Age of Tulips: Confluence and Conflict in Early Modern Consumer Culture (1550-1730) in *Consumption Studies and the History of the Ottoman Empire, 1550-1922, an Introduction*, ed. Donald Quataert (Albany, 2000): 83-106.

⁴² *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi, 1. Kitap*, ed. by Orhan Şaik Gökyay: 180.

⁴³ *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi, 1. Kitap*, ed. by Orhan Şaik Gökyay: 264.

⁴⁴ Sestini, *Beschreibung*: 97.

Flowers in pots were on offer here, but also entire plants and even trees with their roots still on them, to be transplanted, after sale, into the gardens of their new owners. In all likelihood this flower market was an expansion of the Taht-e'lkal'e stands of flower sellers previously mentioned by Evliya; even nowadays, at certain times of the year, plants are available in the very same location. Sestini also explains some of the reasons why demand for flowers was lively: Ottoman women of his time were accustomed to decorate their headdresses with flowers, which obviously needed to be frequently replaced, and it was also customary to give away flowers as presents.⁴⁵

Cultivating Istanbul's gardens

While fields and meadows, at least in principle, could not be owned as private property by Ottoman subjects, the situation was different in the case of gardens, vineyards and vegetable patches. Here private ownership was the norm, and this means that most of the crops which concern us in the present context were grown on properties belonging to individuals. However not all of the actual cultivators owned the land which they worked. To the contrary, wealthy people might have their land cultivated or otherwise tended by hired labourers, who often came to the Istanbul region to do seasonal work. Thus by the second half of the sixteenth century, Albanians, whose labour migrations to Italy had been continuing ever since the 1400s, were arriving in Istanbul as well.⁴⁶ In all probability, these were the non-Muslims to whom certain sultanic rescripts of the late sixteenth century forbade the crossing of the Sea of Marmara. We know however that even so, some Albanians guarded the ripening fruit in the orchards belonging to their employers, and when the occasion presented itself, sometimes acted as strong-arm men in the service of prominent personages.⁴⁷ It is probably due to this latter propensity that Albanian migrants were regarded by the Ottoman administration as potential troublemakers, and their employers were ordered to not put them to work before the men had provided sureties for their good behaviour.

⁴⁵ Sestini speaks of these ornaments for the head as if he had seen them in person, which is hard to believe in the case of Muslim women. But he may have encountered them in the homes of his Christian acquaintances.

⁴⁶ Alain Ducellier, Bernard Doumerc, Brunehilde Imhaus, Jean de Miceli, *Les chemins de l'exil, bouleversements de l'est européen et migrations vers l'ouest à la fin du moyen âge* (Paris, 1992).

⁴⁷ On non-Muslims being refused entry into Anatolia, compare MD 5, p.98, No 224 (973/1565-66). Complaints concerning the misbehaviour of the hired servants of rural property owners, who presumably acted at the instigation of their masters, are reflected in the so-called *adaletnames*, sultanic rescripts of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. At a time when Anatolia was the scene of widespread bandit activity, these were sent out, as a

Apparently these unskilled labourers worked in groups, similarly to the Auvergnats who performed similar types of labour in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century France.⁴⁸ However we also have evidence of workers who seem to have been hired on an individual basis. For in the kadi registers of Eyüp, dating from the mid-eighteenth century, we occasionally find records concerning the deaths and inheritance affairs of men who had been living in the gardens they tended, presumably for the duration of the growing season. Often these people had not brought their families, who continued to live in some (normally Balkan) village.⁴⁹ Unfortunately the documents do not tell us whether the labourers employed on Istanbul's garden patches worked for a wage, or whether they were paid in some other fashion. Nor do we know whether the gardens in question were being cultivated with an eye to the market, or whether they mainly supplied the fruit and vegetables needed by the owners and their households.

As strangers to Istanbul, recent immigrants to the city probably remained largely outside the guilds. However in Evliya's time, the city also contained a recognised guild of gardeners; the sphere of activity assigned to these guildsmen was limited to Istanbul *intra muros*, and Evliya claimed there were 2000 of them, working a thousand gardens. Closely akin were the men who worked on the farms belonging to prominent personages (*çiftlik*), a well-known feature of the countryside surrounding Istanbul, as well as the servants who worked the capital's dairy farms. The Ottoman traveller believed that there were such 2000 dairy farms and 1600 ordinary landholdings, so that the men employed on them, whom Evliya believed to be organised in guilds, amounted to several tens of thousands of people. Apparently the dairyhands possessed a reputation for violent behaviour.

Unfortunately Evliya does not tell us anything about the conditions under which the gardeners, dairymen and farm labourers did their daily work, except for the information that the gardeners were closely associated with the fruitsellers (*manav*). The latter were apparently a much richer

kind of circular, to many governors and kadis, addressing the complaints most frequently proffered by the villagers. For an edition see Halil İnalçık, "Adâletnâmeler," *Belgeler*, II, 3-4 (1965): 49-145.

⁴⁸ Abel Poitrineau, *Ils travaillaient la France, Métiers et mentalités du XVIe au XIXe siècle* (Paris, 1992): 144-151. For a more detailed discussion see *idem*, *Remues d'hommes, Essai sur les migrations montagnardes en France, XVIIe-XVIIIe siècles* (Paris, 1983).

and more prestigious guild; possibly the gardeners formed merely an auxiliary association (*yamak*) to the guild of the fruit merchants. It is difficult to be sure, but the fact that the gardeners did not put up an expensive show in the parade of guildsmen described by Evliya, but contented themselves with a simple display of their fruit – no vegetables were in evidence -- does make it likely that their guild was not rich.

At the time of Domenico Sestini's visit, many gardeners were Greeks, Armenians and 'Sclavonians' – I am not sure whether when employing the latter term, the author had any specific ethnic group in mind, or simply meant 'people speaking a Slavic language'. Greeks from the island of Chios apparently enjoyed the best reputation as gardeners; it is difficult to place this remark of Sestini's in its proper context, for gardeners from the Aegean islands certainly were not much represented among the mid-eighteenth century denizens of the gardens of Eyüp, nor does Evliya say anything about them. In the late nineteenth century, many gardeners came from to Istanbul from the Black Sea villages; possibly the Greek uprising of 1821, along with its aftermath, constituted the reason for the disappearance of the Chiote gardeners from the Istanbul scene. But this is a mere hypothesis in need of verification.

Some of the 'Sclavonians' in question were probably Dalmatians subject to Venice, who especially in the eighteenth century, came to Istanbul in large numbers in order to attempt making a living. For the administration of Venice's few remaining territories outside of Italy was poorly conducted, and ordinary people suffered the consequences. After all, the Venetian patriciate was intent on conciliating local aristocracies, so that the peasants' interests were rarely taken into consideration. Many Dalmatians thus migrated to Istanbul; to the impotent disapproval of the Venetian authorities; and while quite a few of them ultimately returned to their home villages, others remained in the Ottoman capital, not rarely adopting Islam. These migrants occur in the records particularly when they had committed some crime, and the Ottoman authorities were often more than happy to get rid of them by having the *baylo* repatriate them at the expense of the Venetian state. But many of the 'Sclavonian' gardeners encountered by Sestini presumably were

⁴⁹ The countryside surrounding Üsküdar, with its well-known gardens and vineyards, has not to my knowledge been systematically studied for any period later than the early sixteenth century. Doubtless in this latter district, immigrants from Anatolia were as prominent as their Rumelian counterparts were in the vicinity of Eyüp.

poor but not 'marginal', and as the author noted, they spoke a bit of Italian because they were, or had once been, Venetian subjects.⁵⁰

Marketing

In Evliya's time, the fruitsellers seem to have formed a wealthy guild; for otherwise it would be hard to explain why in the parade which this traveller witnessed, and/or on which he was able to obtain documentation, these guildsmen were willing to go to great expense in order to 'put on a brave show'.⁵¹ We hear of trees which had been pulled out by the roots, and were decorated with fruit, rather in the way of nineteenth-century Christmas trees. In addition, there were pavillions complete with ponds and fountains, whose decoration consisted of different fruit strung up on sturdy thread, presumably in the style which in the recent past, was often practiced by Turkish *manavs*. Strings of fruit and chestnuts were also used as prayer beads (*tesbih*) by the parade participants, while the fruit leathers which formed part of the guildsmen's stock in trade had been rolled out to large enough sizes that some the participants had improvised robes from them. Even more remarkable were the ships running on sledges which some of the fruiterers had ordered built, for these were decorated all over with various kinds of fruit. There was even a kind of street theatre presented in front of the pavillion from which the sultan normally watched the show: when some of the 'customers' demanded fruit without pay, a 'pitched battle' with the 'sailors' manning the fruit ship was the result.⁵²

Concerning this little scene, Evliya's commented that the fruit sellers in real life did not behave very differently, for when a ship laden with fruit arrived in the port of Istanbul, the shopkeepers got into fistfights trying to lay their hands upon the produce. Evliya also recorded that those keepers of fruit and vegetable shops who participated the procession which he discussed did so fully armed. Possibly these tradesmen were so combative because they had long been accustomed to deal with some rough competitors, namely the janissaries. While as we have seen, late sixteenth-century janissaries were not supposed to get involved in the trade in produce, the reality

⁵⁰ Paolo Preto, *Venetia e i Turchi* (Florence, 1975): 184-185; it is a great pity that this book, probably because it is available only in Italian, is not used more often by Ottoman historians.

⁵¹ According to Mantran, *Istanbul*: 381, Evliya bases his account on a lost official document which enumerates the guilds participating in a parade.

⁵² *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi, 1. Kitap*, ed. by Orhan Şaik Gökyay: 263.

was often rather different. Not only in Istanbul, but also in provincial towns it was common enough for janissaries to waylay the sellers of produce carrying their goods to market, and to take away the latter's fruit and vegetables in order to sell them – what the original owners received for their pains, if indeed they were paid at all, must have varied according to local circumstances.⁵³ Regrettably in the Istanbul case, we do not possess a systematic study of the penetration of the crafts and petty commerce by janissaries unable to make ends meet on their pay. As a result, we do not know when the commercial activity of these soldiers-turning-militiamen stopped being considered illegitimate and became 'normal'.⁵⁴

Even though in the mid-seventeenth century, the fruit sellers guild was apparently quite prosperous, as traders involved in the capital's food supply, they were not, as was true of merchants trading over long distances, exempt from the suspicious attentions of the market supervisor (*muhtesib*).⁵⁵ This institution from the seventeenth century onwards was gradually transformed into a tax farm, but this development does not mean that the activities of fruit and vegetable sellers, and those of other dealers in foodstuffs, were less minutely controlled. For in addition to the market supervisor, the Grand Vizier's office and that of the kadi of Istanbul were engaged in the same activity of supervision and control. For the second half of the eighteenth century, the numerous cases to be found in the published selections from the Istanbul 'Registers of Commands' (*Ahkâm Defterleri*) document the close monitoring of the food traders on the part of the Ottoman government authorities.⁵⁶

Evlîya Çelebi has provided us with an account of the older, mid-seventeenth-century version of the control process, in which the market supervisor, along with the chief of the grocers, the so-called *bazarbaşı*, played a central role. When describing the procession of Istanbul guildsmen, a description which forms one of the major sources for the present study, the Ottoman travel writer refers to a festively decorated replica of the *muhtesib çardağı*, the lodge of the market inspector. He also mentions another 'office' involved in the process of inspection and taxation, which was

⁵³ Such extortions were not limited to the trade in garden produce. For a veritable 'mafia' active in Istanbul around 1600, and involving janissaries active in the wood and timber trades, see Faroqhi, *Towns and Townsmen*:78-80.

⁵⁴ André Raymond, *Artisans et commerçants au Caire, au XVIII^e siècle*, 2 vols. (Damascus, 1973-74) does provide such a study for late seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Cairo.

⁵⁵ On the functioning of market control, compare Mantran, *Istanbul*: 143-146. On the exemption of long-distance traders, and also the legitimization of Ottoman market supervision in general, see Halil İnalcık, "Capital Formation in the Ottoman Empire", *The Journal of Economic History*, XXIX, 1(1969): 97-140.

represented in the procession along with the *muhtesib çardağı*, namely the so-called 'vegetable house' (*sebzebane*) located near the Yemiş İskelesi ('fruit pier') on the Golden Horn, where the market inspector also officiated at times, aided by a large team of servitors. Here presumably the market supervisor heard cases concerning the misdeeds of fruit and vegetable sellers, particularly those related to poor quality and false weights. His rank was emphasised in the procession by a number of armed soldiers assigned to him, and also by the fact that he was on horseback, a sign of special rank and privilege in the Istanbul context.

When interpreting this information, we must keep in mind that while Evliya describes complaints against delinquent fruit and vegetable sellers, as well as the guilty men's exemplary punishment, these are not 'real' scenes, but rather a kind of play enacted during the procession for the edification of the spectators. Yet we can assume that the scenes in question had at least some connection to ordinary market life, even though we are unable to specify the exact relationship.⁵⁷ Evliya describes the servitors of the market inspector bringing in a couple of men accused of having employed false weights, who were then administered a beating on the soles of their feet (*falaka*). Others were punished by having honey smeared on their faces and then being nailed to a building by their ears, to be molested by flies and wasps. Another possible penalty was to pile the dirty innards of slaughtered animals on the unfortunate man's head, as a mockery of his normal headdress, and then to parade him through the city seated on a donkey, with the disgraced tradesman's head facing the animal's tail. This kind of mock parade is also occasionally shown on Ottoman miniatures; as Evliya tells us, the little procession was accompanied by cryers, who announced that 'this was what would happen to those who defrauded their customers'.

How frequently such scenes happened in everyday life is difficult to judge. In the 1720s, the punishment meted out to bakers caught selling underweight bread was less outwardly dramatic, but involved the destruction of the guilty man's livelihood: his shop and inventory were confiscated and sold to another craftsman. While the surviving documents do not tell us what happened to the ex-bakers, we can surmise that they either left the city, or else tried to make a living as itinerant salesmen or servants. We have not to date found any evidence that fruit and

⁵⁶ Ahmet Kal'a *et alii* (eds.) *İstanbul Külliyyatı I, İstanbul Ahkâm Defterleri...Esnaf Tarihi* (Istanbul, 1997--)

⁵⁷ *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi, 1. Kitap*, ed. by Orhan Şaik Gökyay: 264.

vegetable sellers were treated with the same severity; they may not have been, since everything connected with the bread supply was accorded high priority by the Ottoman authorities.

Apart from the fruit sellers established in shops, Evliya also noted the existence of itinerant salesmen who sold lettuce and other salad greens, but also melons and watermelons when the latter were in season, either from carts or else from fixed places near the piers where these fruit normally arrived.⁵⁸ While apparently Istanbul fruiterers had devised ways of keeping melons and watermelons 'from one year to the next', the fruit lost their smell and were thus regarded as less desirable when out of season.⁵⁹ Thus the salesmen without shops were able to secure a livelihood only for six months of the year. What they did during the cold season remains unknown, possibly they were migrants who returned to their villages for the winter.

Moreover Evliya does not tell us whether guild membership was necessary for this auxiliary employment; quite possibly this was not the case. For while the author calls the established guilds by the term '*esnaf*', he avoids this word in the case of the watermelon sellers, and uses instead the neutral term '*evsaf*', which means no more than just 'qualities' or 'characteristics'. However it is worth emphasising that our information on non-guild labour in general, and the fruit and vegetable trades in particular, is very fragmentary indeed, so that for instance, we cannot tell how important was the proportion of seasonal auxiliaries to that of established guildsmen.⁶⁰

Conclusion.

When confronting the observations of Evliya Çelebi and Domenico Sestini, it is difficult to overlook the continuities in the set of arrangements which secured Istanbul's milk, vegetable and fruit supply from the middle of the seventeenth to the end of the eighteenth century. Throughout the over one hundred and thirty years covered by our study, gardens and dairy farms were owned as private properties by ordinary inhabitants of the capital city, but also by high-level dignitaries and even the ruler himself. While modest proprietors presumably relied largely on the work of family members, many of the more important gardens and vineyards were worked mainly by

⁵⁸ Piles of melons and watermelons sold from roadside stands can be observed in present-day Ankara and Istanbul as well.

⁵⁹ *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi, 1. Kitap*, ed. by Orhan Şaik Gökyay: 264.

⁶⁰ Sestini does not provide much information on the organisation of the fruit trades.

hired labourers. Among the latter, uneasily poised between the rural and urban worlds, immigrants from the Balkans were especially noticeable. It thus makes sense to posit a link between market gardening and the *capacité d'accueil* of the Ottoman capital, where even though guilds of gardeners and the like were not unknown, it was possible for outsiders to insert themselves, if not into the urban fabric proper, then at least into the adjacent 'first circle'. While Von Thünen had suggested that the limits of the 'first circle' in his theoretical model should be placed wherever it became commercially disadvantageous to purchase manure for gardens and meadows from the central city, in the Istanbul context, it seems more practical to locate this limit wherever the owners of gardens and vineyards found it impractical to employ migrants from the provinces.⁶¹

Moreover, although autoconsumption should never be underestimated, the commercial production of fruit, vegetables and milk was predominant throughout the period under investigation, as indicated by the high visibility, in ceremonial contexts, of the seventeenth-century guilds of fruit and vegetable sellers. Another indicator of the significance of commercial farming is the fact that the areas adjacent to the Bosphorus, the Sea of Marmara and the Golden Horn, as soon as settlement surpassed certain densities, without fail came to be part of Istanbul's 'first ring', producing the milk, yoghurt, fruit and vegetables which the urban market demanded. This is worth noting because the later eighteenth century was a period of difficulties for the entire Ottoman Empire. Yet where Istanbul was concerned, political and economic crisis apparently did not imply a major loss of population, nor did the denizens of the Ottoman capital turn their backs to the market and seek their salvation in autoconsumption. Doubtless Sestini's attention to commercial garden cultivation was in part motivated by the physiocratic concerns of many eighteenth-century European intellectuals. But the very fact that he does not claim that the notion of profits to be gained from gardening was alien to Istanbul property owners, in itself indicates that Sestini was describing a milieu in which fruit and vegetables were being grown largely because they were saleable on the market.

Yet within this context of continuity, certain novelties should not be neglected. Several decades ago, Cengiz Orhonlu already had alerted his readers to the expansion of eighteenth-century

⁶¹ Von Thünen, *Der isolierte Staat*: 17.

Istanbul along the shores of the Bosphorus.⁶² This urbanisation of the southern section of both the Rumelian and the Anatolian shores must have furthered the growth of market gardening, particularly since one of the signs of urban sprawl, duly noted by Orhonlu, was the increased traffic of small boats (*kayık, pirem*) which carried people and goods to the piers of the central city. It is also worth noting that the cultivation of table grapes, which does not seem to have been a major feature of the Bosphorus villages in the sixteenth or early seventeenth centuries, and which certainly has never been important in the twentieth-century history of the city, was significant enough in the 1780s to attract the attention of a foreign visitor with an active interest in commercial agriculture.⁶³

Less important in quantitative terms, but not to be discounted by the cultural historian, is the expansion of market-oriented flower cultivation in the course of the eighteenth century; until proof of the contrary is found, I would interpret Evliya's scanty information on flower sellers and flower markets as an indicator that these activities were not as yet major features of mid-seventeenth-century Istanbul markets. That flower selling was more important in Sestini's time probably should be linked to the growing availability of material goods to the better-off inhabitants of the eighteenth-century Ottoman Empire, and particularly to the denizens of the capital. This development I would regard as posing problems of some significance, which to date however, have been explored only in a very preliminary fashion.⁶⁴

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⁶² Cengiz Orhonlu, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Şehircilik ve Ulaşım Üzerine Araştırmalar*, ed. Salih Özbaran (İzmir, 1984)

⁶³ That table grapes from the shores of the Bosphorus were not an item of produce frequently purchased by Istanbul customers around 1600, can be deduced from the near absence of references to them in the Mühimme registers of the period, where by contrast, we find plenty of information on Aegean grapes and raisins; compare Faroqhi, *Towns and Townsmen*: 81-82. However from Gyllius' description it is obvious that some vineyards did exist in the mid-sixteenth century; compare Gyllius, *İstanbul Boğazı*:20.

⁶⁴ For preliminary explorations, compare Quataert ed., *Consumption Studies and the History of the Ottoman Empire*, as well as the present author's "Consumption and Elite Status in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries: Exploring the Ottoman Case" in *Studies in Ottoman Social and Economic Life*, ed. Raoul Motika, Christoph Herzog and Michael Ursinus (Heidelberg, 1999) :141-169.